

Message Text

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ACTION IO-11

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 CU-02 INR-07

NSAE-00 USIA-06 OIC-02 /047 W
----- 086582

R 291140Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3073

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LAGOS 1158

E.O. 11652: OCON, UNESCO

SUBJECT: UNESCO CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF EDUCATION OF AFRICAN
MEMBER STATES

REF: STATE 18029 AND STATE 15320

1. CONFERENCE OPENED JANUARY 27 AS SCHEDULED. THE DAY WAS
UNEVENTFUL. NIGERIAN CHIEF OF STAFF, SUPREME HEADQUARTERS,
OBASANJO, OPENED CONFERENCE ON BEHALF OF HEAD OF STATE
MUHAMMED. HIS SPEECH WAS VERY BRIEF. UNESCO DIRECTOR GENERAL
M'BOW WAS ALSO ADDRESSED SESSION. HE REVIEWED EDUCATIONAL DEVELOP-
MENTS SINCE LAST CONFERENCE IN NAIROBI, NOTING THAT THERE HAS BEEN AN
ABSOLUTE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF ILLITERATES IN AFRICA. HE
CALLED FOR REFORM OF AFRICAN EDUCATIONALL SYSTEMS TO MAKE THEM
MORE RELEVANT TO THE SOCIETIES IN WHICH THEY ARE FOUND AND
URGED AFRICANS TO REJECT THEIR COLONIAL HERITAGE BY RESHAPING
EDUCATIONAL CURRICULA TO EMPHASIZE AFRICAN TRADITION IN LANGUAGE
AND MAKE STUDENTS GENUINE AFRICANS.

2. OAU DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL, NOUREDDINE DJOUDI, ADDRESSED
SESSION AND CALLED FOR DECOLONIALIZATION OF THE MINDS OF AFRICAN
YOUTH AND STRESSED CONNECTION OF EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.
HE MADE VERY BRIEF REFERENCE TO EVILS OF ZIONISM AND RACISM
WHICH HAS ALIENATED AFRICANS FROM THEIR CULTURE. ECA EXECUTIVE
SECRETARY, A. ADEDEJI, READ A WELL THOUGHT OUT AND DETAILED PAPER
RELATING EDUCATION TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

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3. ALSO ADDRESSING THE OPENING SESSION WAS DR. MOHEI EL DINE SIBER, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE ARAB EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND SCIENTIFIC ASSOCIATION WHO STRESSED THE BROTHRHOOD OF AFRICANS AND ARABS AND CHARGED COLONIALISM HAD DIVIDED THE AFRICANS POLITICALLY, ECONOMICALLY ANDCULTURALLY. HE URGED ALL AFRICANS TO WORK TOGETHER FOR CONTINENTAL UNITY AND TO END THE DIVISIONS BETWEEN ARABS AND THEIR BLACK BROTHERS.

4. SECOND DAY MADE UP OF SPEECHES. MANY DELEGATES REFERRING TO PROGRESS OR LACK THEREOF IN EDUCATIONAL FIELD SINCE 1968 NAIROBI MEETING. NOTHING OUT OF ORDINARY CONTAINED IN SPEECHES. CAMEROON DELEGATE DID, HOWEVER, EXPRESS THANKS TO INTER-NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS WHICH HAD HELPED CAMEROON EDUCATION AND SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED USAID.

5. NIGERIAN COMMISSIONER FOR EDUCATION, LT. COL. A. A. ALI, WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE. IN HIS BRIEF ACCEPTANCE SPEECH HE WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF IBRD LOANS IN NIGERIA, COMPLAINING THAT TERMS WERE TOO RESTRICTIVE CAUSING LONG DELAYS TO COMPLETE PROJECTS.

6. THE THEME WHICH DOMINATED THE FIRST TWO DAYS OF THE CONFERENCE WAS THE DEMAND FOR RESHAPING AFRICA'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM TO MAKE IT MORE RELEVANT TO AFRICAN SOCIETY AND THE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: EDUCATION, MINISTERIAL MEETINGS, CULTURAL EXCHANGE AGREEMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976LAGOS01158
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760034-0996
From: LAGOS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760110/aaaaaihp.tel
Line Count: 87
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION IO
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 18029
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <17 MAY 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UNESCO CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF EDUCATION OF AFRICAN MEMBER STATES
TAGS: PORG, XA, UNESCO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006